

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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CHENEY, DOBIS TEAM UP ON PLAN TO KEEP KNIVES OUT OF SCHOOLS

INDIANAPOLIS – State Reps. Duane Cheney (D-Portage) and Chet Dobis (D-Merrillville) have joined forces to author legislation to prevent people from carrying knives onto school property in Indiana.

The measure, set for consideration during the 2006 session of the Indiana General Assembly, would make it a Class B misdemeanor (up to 180 days in jail and a fine of \$1,000) to possess any kind of knife on school property or a school bus, with the offense becoming a Class D felony (up to three years in prison and a maximum fine of \$10,000) if a person uses the knife to cause serious bodily injuries.

"People find it hard to believe that there isn't a law prohibiting someone from carrying a knife into a school, but it's true," Cheney said. "After a knife attack took place at Valparaiso High School in November 2004, many police officers and school superintendents have mentioned to me that they think a change was needed to correct an obvious gap in state law."

That incident had a personal impact for Dobis, since his daughter taught the Spanish class in which the student injured several students with a machete and a tree saw.

"Most of the attention on violence in schools focuses on the use of guns, but the risks caused by knives are just as great," Dobis said. "They are easy to conceal on a person's body, and it's difficult to fend off an attack because you just cannot tell what is going to happen. School violence is a very serious topic, and I think it is prudent for us to move quickly to give officials the tools they need to keep our children safe."

Cheney added, "A judge pointed out to me that if this student had not attacked anyone, he could not have been arrested because there is no law preventing him from carrying those knives onto the school campus."

The proposal contains language that still would enable school property to be used by groups like the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts that occasionally use knives, and Cheney and Dobis said it would not impact vocational education classes or school cafeterias.

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